

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 - 20 (canceled)

Claim 21 (currently amended): A composite refractory stopper used to control the flow of molten metal consisting of

a) a refractory core composed of ceramic materials, [[and]]

b) a means for conducting an electric current on the surface of said refractory core
[[.]] and

c) a means for electrically connecting said means for conducting an electric current to an electrically activated control means such that said electrically activated control means can beneficially affect the flow of said molten metal.

Claim 22 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 21 wherein said refractory core is essentially composed of ceramic oxides.

Claim 23 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 21 wherein said refractory core is essentially composed of metal carbides.

Claim 24 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 21 wherein said refractory core is essentially composed of a combination of ceramic oxides, metal carbides and elemental carbon.

Claim 25 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 24 wherein said elemental carbon is in the form of graphite or carbon black.

Claim 26 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 21 wherein the said means of conducting an electric current on the surface of the core is an electrically conductive coating.

Claim 27 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 26 wherein the said electrically conductive coating is essentially composed of elemental carbon.

Claim 28 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 27 wherein the said elemental carbon is in the form of graphite or carbon black.

Claim 29 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 27 wherein said electrically conductive coating includes a bonding material that positively affixes said electrically conductive coating to the surface of said refractory core at temperatures less than 950 degrees Fahrenheit and continues to affix said electrically conductive coating to the surface of said refractory core at temperatures above 950 degrees Fahrenheit.

Claim 30 (previous presented): The composite refractory stopper in claim 29 wherein said bonding material positively affixes said electrically conductive coating to the surface of said refractory core such that said bonding material does not surround said elemental carbon, individually or in the aggregate, in said electrically conductive coating thereby allowing said elemental carbon to make electrical contact with a separate electrically charged element in the system.